A Developmental Services Bulletin from the Ministry of Community and Social Services

Supporting People In The Community

The closing of institutions has meant the beginning of a new life for many Ontarians with a developmental disability. Over the past 25 years, more than 6,000 people have left our provincially-run institutions to live in Ontario communities.

With less than a year to go before we close Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres, we continue to work with our community partners to help more people take their rightful place as members of their communities.

Because of the excellent work of everyone involved in the Facilities Initiative, we have heard so many success stories.

We have worked hard together to help people be well-supported in the community — group living, family homes and supported independent living — these are all great models of community-based accommodation that have worked well for many people.

But we all know that not everyone needs such intensive levels of care, such as group living.

It depends on a person's needs, preferences, abilities and support requirements.

Last year, as part of our long-term plan to modernize developmental services across the province, we expanded the range of options that help people live in the community.

Through our Innovative Residential Model, we invited individuals, families and agencies to collaborate and propose individually-tailored housing arrangements.

They decided how and where they would live.

We want to do more of this — helping people develop housing options that are best suited to their personal needs, wants and dreams.

As our community partners, we are counting on you.

Spotlight on transformation

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In this issue of Spotlight, you'll meet four individuals who helped map out their own support plans and living arrangements.

Read their stories — we hope you are as excited as we are about helping others achieve the same kind of independence and personal fulfillment.

They can because they think they can.
— Virgil

Life In The Big City

Life was very different for Barb when she lived at Huronia Regional Centre — the place she called home for 43 years after being admitted at the age of seven.

It's hard to believe she ever lived there, because today she's living on the sixth floor of a condominium building in the heart of downtown Toronto.

Downtown living offers much of what Barb loves to do. She's just steps away from restaurants, the theatre, grocery stores, shopping malls, the doctor's office and church.

She gets together regularly with other residents to take part in all kinds of events — everything from dinner parties and movie and popcorn nights, to open houses for family, friends and neighbours.

How did she do it?

With the help of Montage Support Services.

After Barb left Huronia Regional Centre, Montage Support Services set her up in one of the agency's community homes, where she lived for 10 years. She did so well in the community that she was ready for her own new condo. So Montage Support Services made that happen.

Barb now lives in one of nine condominiums that Montage operates in the city. Their condo model offers a more independent living setting for individuals needing less support from paid staff.

The agency maximizes the level of staff support and available resources by clustering the condo units in groups of three at each building, and staff move from apartment to apartment as needed.

Now that's an efficient and effective way to give somebody the support and independence they need and deserve.

Onwards And Upwards

Onwards and upwards is a fitting motto for Mark's life. He's good-natured and outgoing, has cerebral palsy, a severe hearing impairment and limited communication and he has always set his sights high.

He spent his early years at home with his family, but moved to one of Ontario's provincially-run facilities, Prince Edward Heights, for 20 years after his family could no longer support him at home. When Prince Edward Heights closed, he moved to Kingston in 1998 to live in a house with two roommates with support from Community Living Kingston. He moved again in 2003, sharing an apartment with just one roommate.

Four years later, Mark is living in a Supported Independent Living apartment with a new housemate. Together, they enjoy maintaining their home.

Staff are on hand to provide support to both Mark and his housemate, but only as needed.

His neighbours say he can always "perk up the gloomiest of days" with his smile.

Best of all, his family, friends and former staff who cared for him are in awe of the man he's become.

What is Supported Independent Living?

This kind of living arrangement is for adults with a developmental disability who live in apartments in the community and only require minimal staff support from a transfer payment agency. It is for individuals who need some help with daily living activities such as meal preparation, managing money, shopping for groceries, housework or using the telephone.

Together We Are Stronger
Ongwanada Home Share

Kingston is home to Ongwanada. Founded in 1948 as a tuberculosis sanatorium, Ongwanada evolved into a chronic care hospital, a facility for children and adults with developmental disabilities, and most recently, a non-profit organization providing community-based support to approximately 600 individuals in Kingston and eastern Ontario.

Ongwanada's Home Share program offers families or individuals the opportunity to share their home with a child or adult who has a developmental disability. The program fosters rewarding and long-lasting relationships that enrich the lives of all participants.

Here's a letter from Home Share Providers Glen and Linda Neff about Doug. His is a great story. It just goes to show that everybody belongs; that each of us, no matter our strengths or abilities, has a role to play. We all contribute to the life and character of our communities, and together, we are stronger.

"When we registered with Ongwanada Home Share Program, my husband and I knew our potential match could have a developmental or physical disability, or both. This didn't phase me. Interacting with folks gives meaning to my life.

We were introduced to Doug, a 50 year-old man who from age 11 had lived in an institution and then a group home. When he moved in with us, people who knew him said it would never work. He was shy and nervous and had behavioural issues. He didn't like going out where there were people, especially to restaurants, and would never join in any group activities.

After living with us for six years, he is much more outgoing. He goes to church, concerts, hockey games and out to dinner with us. He is cooperative and attends day programming five days a week at Crescent Centre, and has even joined its choir. He loves to sing, especially gospel hymns. People stop in their tracks when they hear him sing — he's got the most resonating voice.

Doug is a special person. All he needed was more attention and to be given a chance. His life has changed for the best — but so has ours! We haven't given him one thing that he hasn't given to us 10 times over.

— Glen and Linda Neff

Patrick And South-East Grey Support Services

Once billed as an agency that provided traditional workshops and group home settings, South-East Grey Support Services has really evolved over the years.

Today the agency provides a full range of community-based services including accommodation, employment, day program, planning and family supports for 60 people with intellectual disabilities in Grey County.

Many of the agency's clientele used to live in provincially-run facilities — Edgar, Midwestern, Oxford and Huronia Regional Centres — including Patrick who lived at Midwestern Regional Centre for a few years before it closed in 1998.

Patrick's story is nothing short of remarkable. He's progressed from needing 24-hour support for his chronic diabetes and behavioural issues to living on his own with minimal support.

The closure of Midwestern in 1998 meant that Patrick needed a new place to live. So the Ministry of Community and Social Services provided funding to South-East Grey Support Services to purchase and renovate a home into a duplex with Patrick in one unit and night staff in the other. Initially, staff provided him with 24-hour support. As he adjusted to living in his new home, he needed less support. He has progressed to the point where, today, all he really needs is for someone to check in on him every now and then. The family living next door to him does that.

Working closely together, Patrick's physician, a diabetes educator and a psychiatrist, reduced most of his medications. Patrick grew healthier and more emotionally secure. He works, exercises and communicates more clearly.

His exercise routines have had a positive effect on his health. His long-term blood tests are now so good that his doctor says, "It's as if Patrick is no longer diabetic." He can even indulge in the occasional treat without compromising his health.

Today Patrick enjoys life in the community — going out for meals, doing his own grocery shopping, swimming and taking music lessons.

Now that's transformation at its best!

Cost of Service

In 1997, the annual cost to provide supports to Patrick was $106,000. But he really didn't need such a high level of support to succeed. He's doing much better today living in an individual home, rather than a group home and his care now costs $49,000 a year.

Ontario tables proposed developmental services legislation

Minister of Community and Social Services Madeleine Meilleur chose May 15 – Community Living Day at the Legislature – to introduce new developmental services legislation.

If passed, the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 would replace the existing Developmental Services Act, 1974.

The new legislation would give us the framework we need to support what we started in 2004 when we announced our plans to transform Ontario's system of developmental services.

Front row, left to right:
Geoff McMullen, Provincial Network; Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services; Ann Kenny, Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs; Helen Vale, Reena; Peter Marrese, Community Living Toronto.

Back row, left to right:
Bruce Rivers, Community Living Toronto; Christy Barber, Family Alliance Ontario; Rick Strutt, Community Living Toronto; Chris Beesley, parent; Paul Burston, Christian Horizons; Janet MacMaster, Ontario March of Dimes; Orville Endicott, Community Living Ontario.

If passed, the act would:

- **improve service** – people would only need to go to one place to apply for services.
- **increase choice** – people would have the option of receiving funding directly to purchase services that suit their needs.
- **improve fairness** – everyone would use the same application package and services would be based on need.

For more information about what the legislation would do, please visit:

www.mcss.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/news/releases/080515.htm

Stay tuned – we plan to provide you with more information about the new legislation in a later issue of Spotlight.

> "The current Developmental Services Act is out of date. It speaks to a time when we supported people in institutions, not communities. We need legislation that recognizes that people with developmental disabilities can live much more independently in their communities with the right supports. And we need legislation that recognizes that people want more choice in the supports they receive."
>
> **— Minister of Community and Social Services Madeleine Meilleur.**

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You Asked Us

Question:

What will happen to the land and buildings at Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres?

Answer:

We won't know until after the last resident moves out and the Ontario Realty Corporation steps in and talks to parties that are interested in exploring potential uses.

Question:

What will happen to the furniture and equipment?

Answer:

Some of the furniture and equipment that an individual needs follows them with their move into the community, as long as it does not impact any of the remaining residents in the facilities. We will be distributing the remaining items to other ministry and service providers that provide support to our residents. Whatever we do, we want to make sure the furniture and equipment go where they are needed most.

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